

# The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at [www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk) and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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## Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – Other Agencies

### ***Finding a balance: how to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is for everyone***

This important new report<sup>1</sup> has just been published by More in Common<sup>2</sup>:

“Recent years have seen a number of high profile, polarised and occasionally acrimonious debates about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). These debates between activists, politicians, practitioners and columnists give the impression of deep, binary divides on the merits (or harms) of embracing EDI.

This binary does not however reflect public opinion. **The British public are five times more likely to say that EDI is a good, rather than a bad, thing** – and support for EDI extends across Britain. The public are also more likely than not to think that EDI leads to fairer outcomes and that they personally benefit from EDI practice – **most people do not see EDI in zero sum terms**. That sentiment is not limited to the most progressive segments of the UK but extends across more socially conservative groups too.” [p5 – emphases theirs]

The report goes on to make 10 recommendations for improving/renewing EDI work. These are:

1. “Tailor EDI activities to the employer or institution: Linking EDI to people’s day to day roles and how to do those roles well is the surest way to build support.
2. Focus on people not contested concepts: Utilise people’s real world experience and stories and appeal to people’s shared sense of decency and fairness.
3. Build a culture of curiosity and generosity – not of criticism: EDI should create spaces where people can ask questions and not worry about making mistakes.
4. Distinguish between inside and outside the workplace/institution: The public are more likely to believe that codes of conduct should be enforced in work.

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Stears, Tim Soutphommasane, Luke Tryl and Anouschka Rajah. *Finding a balance: how to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is for everyone*. More in Common, 2024, <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/media/u42d5qz1/finding-a-balance-ucl-policy-lab-university-of-oxford-and-more-in-common-report.pdf>. There is also a web summary at: [https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/research/finding-a-balance/?utm\\_source=Equally+Ours+Newsletter+2024&utm\\_campaign=8ffedac00b-Newsletter+April+1+2024&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_93cf2d2bcb-8ffedac00b-120687778](https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/research/finding-a-balance/?utm_source=Equally+Ours+Newsletter+2024&utm_campaign=8ffedac00b-Newsletter+April+1+2024&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_93cf2d2bcb-8ffedac00b-120687778).

<sup>2</sup> “More in Common was founded in the aftermath of the tragic murder of Jo Cox MP in 2016. More in Common takes its name from Jo’s maiden speech in Parliament where she said: ‘*We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.*’ Our hope is that through our work, we honour Jo’s memory and legacy.” [Taken from: <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/about-us/>].

5. Embrace merit: Practitioners should build on the public's conviction that EDI leads to fair outcomes by highlighting how it reduces barriers to opportunity.
6. Use inclusive framings: Avoiding 'us vs them' frames and showing how EDI activity benefits the whole of society, not just particular groups, is important.
7. Think about messengers and coalitions: Broadening EDI messengers to different parts of the ideological spectrum will expand support.
8. EDI and free speech go hand in hand: Britons want young people to be exposed to a range of voices, but also think extreme forms of speech can create dangers.
9. Where possible, retain and explain: Britons favour an approach that provides a 'warts and all' understanding of history.
10. Know when to intervene: Commentary and engagement on issues that are relevant to the institution will receive greater public support." [p6]

Recommended.<sup>3</sup>

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## **LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations**

### **Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials [continued] and Protests against Drag Queen Storytimes**

#### **“Backlash After NSW City Council Votes to Ban LGBTQI+ Books in Libraries”**

A recent news-story<sup>4</sup> in Australia:

“Cumberland City Council in Sydney’s West has voted to remove books about same-sex parenting from its libraries – and the decision has quickly been met with backlash.

At a council meeting on May 1, the council voted 6/5 to ‘take immediate action to rid same sex parents books/materials in Council’s library service.’

Councillor Steve Christou put forward the motion, and claimed the now-banned same-sex parenting books did not align with the values of his community.

Cr Christou repeated statements such as ‘our kids shouldn’t be sexualised’, and ‘hands off our kids’ throughout the meeting [...]

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<sup>3</sup> Source: *Equally Ours Newsletter*, 4 Apr 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Antimony Deor “Backlash After NSW City Council Votes to Ban LGBTQI+ Books in Libraries”, *Star Observer*, 8 May 2024, <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/cumberland-city-council-libraries-ban-lgbtqi-books/230599>.

A library worker in the council area, who wished to remain anonymous, spoke to Star Observer about the decision, saying that management removed books without any prior consultation with members of staff.

*'My colleagues and I are appalled,' they told Star Observer.*

*'Staff are distressed and furious. Library staff care deeply about serving all members of their community, and they want all staff to be supported in an inclusive workplace.'*<sup>5</sup>

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## **LGBTQ+ issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government**

### **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021**

As you will no doubt have seen in the media, Scotland has passed this new Act which has led to a number of controversial statements.

Equality Network<sup>6</sup> has issued a helpful 'explainer'<sup>7</sup>, setting out what the implications are for LGBTQ+ people.

It outlines what may constitute a hate crime, with the 'rider':

"It is important though to know that many forms of prejudiced or offensive behaviour are NOT hate crimes. It is not a crime to be prejudiced, and the right to freedom of expression means that people may express their prejudice in offensive, shocking or disturbing ways, without crossing the line into criminal behaviour."

As well as giving advice about what to do if you experience hate crime, the guidance also spells out what the new "stirring up hatred" offence involves.

"Since 1986, there has been an offence of stirring up racial hatred. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, a similar offence is being introduced to cover stirring up hatred on grounds of age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, or variations in sex characteristics (intersex).

The offence of stirring up hatred on one of those grounds applies where someone behaves in a way that a reasonable person would consider to be threatening or abusive, and they deliberately intend their behaviour to stir up hatred [...]

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Peter Tatchell Foundation *Weekly*, #300, 9 May 2024.

<sup>6</sup> "Equality Network is a national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) equality and human rights charity." Taken from: <https://www.equality-network.org/our-work/policy-team/hate-crime-in-scotland/>.

<sup>7</sup> "New hate crime laws", <https://www.equality-network.org/our-work/policy-team/hate-crime-in-scotland/>.

The law also says that behaviour does not count as threatening or abusive solely because it involves discussion or criticism of matters relating to age, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity or variations in sex characteristics. To be this offence, the behaviour must be specifically threatening or abusive (not just critical), and it must be done with the intention of stirring up hatred, and not be otherwise reasonable.” [emphasis theirs]

In relation to criticisms that the new legislation does not cover women, the guidance says:

“Unlike the Equality Act [...] the hate crime legislation does not include sex as a protected characteristic. The original proposals for the legislation did envisage including sex. But the main women’s organisations in Scotland believed that that might do more harm than good. Misogyny and sexism are pervasive through society. The main women’s organisations believe that specific legislation is needed to address this, and that, for a number of reasons, hate crime legislation is not suitable [...]

The Scottish Government set up a study, chaired by Helena Kennedy KC, to look into this, which recommended legislation to address misogyny. The Scottish Government then consulted on the proposals. **The Equality Network calls on the Scottish Government to urgently introduce a bill to tackle misogyny.**” [emphasis theirs]

Equality Network have also provided a link to an article<sup>8</sup> in *The Scotsman* by Vic Valentine, Manager of Scottish Trans, which looks at the new legislation from their perspective, and which includes this as a way forward:

“Do I disagree, profoundly, with many of the things that are said about and to trans people on a daily basis? Of course. Do I think that they cause real upset and harm to trans people? I know that they do – I see it every day from working with and talking to trans people across Scotland. But complaining to the police about offensive views that people are lawfully allowed to hold and express is no solution to the rise in prejudice and hateful sentiment, nor is it the right thing to do.

It could also in some cases give people who are being deliberately offensive and unpleasant the opportunity to portray themselves as the victims. The solutions are instead quite different. They include speaking out against prejudice, and in favour of a generous and supportive society, and modelling that in our own behaviour.”

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<sup>8</sup> Vic Valentine “Scotland's Hate Crime Act does not make every transphobic remark illegal, and nor should it”, *The Scotsman*, 31 Mar 2024, <https://archive.is/Wrki9#selection-885.0-885.91>.

## ***Cass Review: Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: final report***

The final report<sup>9</sup> has just been published. There is an online summary<sup>10</sup>, plus the full report can be downloaded from the website.

Inevitably, perhaps, this has been greeted with mixed feelings (to put it mildly).

Thoughtful analyses and reviews of the report have made some important comments – some of these are drawn together here from Stonewall<sup>11</sup> and Mermaids<sup>12</sup>.

As Mermaids say:

“Media organisations and elected representatives hostile to trans youth have sought to misrepresent the report’s findings and call into question the validity of their experiences, and we are deeply disappointed, although not surprised, that Dr Cass’ own calls for compassion and respect have been completely disregarded.”

In relation to specific topics in the report:

### Social transition

- “Social transition: Dr Cass has not called for adolescents to have their right to their identity or autonomy removed. Nor did Dr Cass recommend a blanket ban on social transitioning for children of any age. Most significantly, Dr Cass did not support unilateral ‘outing’ of trans young people by schools. There are clear gaps between recommendations and practical policy, and we’re already hearing early reports of Dr Cass’ analysis of – and recommendations about – social transition being used to challenge trans young people’s right to identity.
  - Initial opinion: We are concerned that Dr Cass’ recommendations are being misrepresented in discussions around the draft guidance for schools and colleges in England on supporting ‘gender questioning children’, and may be misrepresented to justify restrictions on children and young people’s right to identity in school.
  - Next actions: Along with our partners in the children and young people, trans, LGBTQ+, and children’s rights movements, we will

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<sup>9</sup> *Cass Review: Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: final report*. Cass Review, 2024, <https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/>.

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/>.

<sup>11</sup> “The Cass Review – our initial review and actions”, Stonewall, 18 Apr 2024, [https://stonewall.org.uk/cass-review?utm\\_source=Supporter+Comms&utm\\_campaign=08c58a8cb4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2024\\_04\\_18\\_02\\_36&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0-08c58a8cb4-%5BLIST\\_EMAIL\\_ID%5D](https://stonewall.org.uk/cass-review?utm_source=Supporter+Comms&utm_campaign=08c58a8cb4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_04_18_02_36&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0-08c58a8cb4-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D).

<sup>12</sup> “The Cass Review: Mermaid’s response in depth”, Mermaids, 25 Apr 2024, <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/news/mermaids-response-to-the-cass-review-in-depth/>.

continue advocating to the Department for Education for guidance that supports trans and gender diverse children and young people to thrive at school.” [Stonewall]

“The Cass Review does not, as has been misrepresented in the press, recommend a blanket ban on social transition for any age group, and specifically recognises the rights and agency of young people to present how they choose. Dr Cass calls for early access to support for young children and their families so that they can be supported around decisions relating to social transition.

However, Dr Cass recognises that ‘there is no single definition of social transition’ but then goes on to speak of ‘full’ and ‘partial’ social transition, without clarity.

As well as this lack of clarity, young people have told us that they are frustrated by the report’s desire to pinpoint a ‘cause’ for trans young people to be open about who they are and are worried that it may be interpreted to limit social transition, particularly in schools.” [Mermaids]

### Puberty blockers and gender affirming hormones

- “Puberty blockers and gender affirming hormones: The Cass Review Final Report argues that the evidence on puberty blockers is insufficient, but also acknowledges their efficacy for some trans young people. It recommends that more evidence be gathered through compulsory medical trials, which raises ethical concerns which will need to be addressed. Importantly, the Cass Review did not call for blanket bans on puberty blockers and this needs to be fully reflected in policy and service development with clear guidance issued at the earliest opportunity to prevent any blanket bans being implemented.
- Initial opinion: Dr Cass has now provided further clarity on the methodology used in the report which we welcome. We call for funding to support research and development in this important area. In a politicised decision-making environment, we are concerned that nuanced recommendations around their efficacy for specific groups will not be implemented, and that this will lead to blanket bans on hormones and puberty blockers, the treatment decisions for which need to be made in the best interest of the child or young person seeking treatment in line with recognised best practice for individual care.
- Next actions: We will call on NHS England to set out how children and young people who, based on a medical practitioners’ opinion, need puberty blockers will be prescribed them in a timely manner and reassure these individuals that they will not be waiting multiple years for multiple assessments to access this care.” [Stonewall]

“The report acknowledges the efficacy of puberty delaying treatment for some trans young people, while arguing that the evidence base is insufficient. The report also recognises that most young people receiving puberty suppressing treatment on the NHS aren’t doing so until it is too



late for them to be effective (an average age of 15) as a result of long waiting lists and significant barriers to accessing care.

The report also calls for 'extreme caution' in prescribing gender affirming hormones to 16 and 17 year olds, which has already led to a review of prescription policy for all over 16s announced by NHS England, and the convening of a new multi-disciplinary team to oversee prescriptions for 16-17 year olds. We believe this is a knee jerk reaction from NHSE which may delay access to care.

There are questions about the way in which existing research has been used, evaluated and in some cases excluded from the review's consideration. Dr Cass has agreed to provide clarity on this.

We have significant concerns about mandatory participation in research as a condition of access to treatment, and the way in which this area of gender care has been politicised far more than any other." [Mermaids]

### Services for young adults

"Young people have told us that they are worried by suggestions in the media that Cass has recommended a block on transition until 25, particularly for neurodivergent young people." [Mermaids]

### Neurodivergence

"The Cass Report acknowledges that neurodivergence and mental health conditions are common among trans young people, and that these young people require a holistic approach to ensure that all their needs are supported.

However, there's no clarity about why all young people should be screened for these conditions, what impact this will have on access to specialist gender care, or on waiting times.

We are also concerned that the report implies that neurodivergent young people who are autistic are less trustworthy in articulating their trans identity than their neurotypical counterparts or that this capacity is limited until their 'early 20s'." [Mermaids]

If anyone is interested in reading a more in-depth analysis of the Review and of the evidence that it is drawn from, then there is a thorough assessment in an article<sup>13</sup> by Cal Horton from the Centre for Diversity, Research, Policy and Practice, Oxford Brookes University.

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<sup>13</sup> Cal Horton "The Cass Review: Cis-supremacy in the UK's approach to healthcare for trans children", *International Journal of Transgender Health*, [open access], 14 Mar 2024, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/26895269.2024.2328249?needAccess=true>.



To conclude, Sarah Graham<sup>14</sup> makes some powerful points about the wider context:

“I’m not an expert in gender-identity medicine and, though I have some personal reservations about Cass’s recommendations, I’m not the right person to comment on them. But the report does highlight one important point: that the ‘exceptionally toxic’ discourse surrounding trans healthcare is doing real harm to the real patients stuck in the middle of it. And, right now, those trans young people have very real anxieties about what the future might hold.

I’ve written before about the so-called ‘debate’ around trans-inclusive healthcare. It’s become one of Parliament’s favourite topics for cheap political point scoring, but is too often disconnected from the reality of both patients’ lives and clinical practice. Indeed, while politicians and commentators argue among themselves about issues in the abstract, the only people who really lose out are the patients.”

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## Broader issues – Other Agencies

### ***Mainstreaming hate: how the Right exploits the crisis to divide us***

The IRR have just produced this important analysis<sup>15</sup> of “[...] how far-right ideas have already passed into the mainstream and what we can do to push back against them.” [p1]

This paragraph towards the end of the paper summarises the issues well:

We can be left with little doubt that the far Right is growing in confidence, and for good reason. The diverse conspiracy movements, the hard Right’s fixation with so-called ‘woke’ issues and the government’s cruel immigration system make fertile recruiting ground, but it is the bolstering of their messaging from the media and high office that should most concern anti-racists and anyone committed to a progressive and fair society. Hard-right rhetoric has the potential to make an issue that may not be the most important to ‘ordinary working people’ suddenly become a key concern in the mind of target voters. Despite soaring interest rates, volatile inflation and a precarious rental market, sections of the political class and the media want us to focus on confected moral panics and ‘wokery’. Whilst the politics of reaction may dominate our culture, it is

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<sup>14</sup> Sarah Graham “The Cass Review is a warning for all of us about how we debate trans healthcare”, *i*, 10 Apr 2024, [https://inews.co.uk/opinion/cass-review-warning-debate-trans-healthcare-2999478?qad\\_source=1&qclid=CjwKCAjwoa2xBhACEiwA1sb1BJJaVrbyz0mshXidCh2iEtJcA9AVCBbZSDd6fyAc5QG\\_r-u8sm3laRoCat0QAvD\\_BwE](https://inews.co.uk/opinion/cass-review-warning-debate-trans-healthcare-2999478?qad_source=1&qclid=CjwKCAjwoa2xBhACEiwA1sb1BJJaVrbyz0mshXidCh2iEtJcA9AVCBbZSDd6fyAc5QG_r-u8sm3laRoCat0QAvD_BwE).

<sup>15</sup> Liz Fekete and Liam Shrivastava. *Mainstreaming hate: how the Right exploits the crisis to divide us*. IRR, 2024, <https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Mainstreaming-the-far-Right-2.pdf>.

important to point out that it does not necessarily reflect the values of most people. The obsession with the 'broken' immigration system is at odds with the fact that most people feel positively about immigration and don't believe it causes crime or negatively impacts on British workers. However, it would be foolish to think that the constant media-driven frenzy on these issues isn't making an impact." [p16]

The recommendations for what can be done are important too:

- Invest in political education
- Combat the spread of disinformation
- Push back against the scapegoating of minorities
- Unify in struggle
- Stand against nativism
- Fightback against the war on refugees and asylum seekers.

Recommended.<sup>16</sup>

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

EDI = Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

IRR = Institute of Race Relations

NSW = New South Wales

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This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

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<sup>16</sup> Source: *IRR News*, 4 Apr 2024.